

The Athenian Mercury.

Tuesday, November 26 1695.

Quest. 1. In the late King James his time, a Relation of mine turn'd to the Romish Religion; He had an only Son, who refusing to pay his Father a blind Obedience, stuck fast to the Religion he was bred in: His Father hoping to make him turn, sent him to France: The young Man remov'd bore all the Assaults of the most cunning there, answering his Fathers Expectations in every thing, but his Stedfastness to the Principles of the Church of England. Upon the late happy Revolution, the Father made away with all he had, and went into Ireland, where he yet remains in a Poor Condition. The Son forsaken, and Destitute of Subsistence in a strange Country, and Exposed to the cruell st. Enemies of our Religion, yet made a shift, by the help of Heaven, to live among them, till about four years since he came Home, and an Uncle of mine kept him till last Easter; When my Uncle dy'd, and all the young Mans hopes with him. I have endeavor'd to maintain him ever since, but the Charge is above my Ability, which he is so sensible of, that it has almost cast him into a Consumption. I've done all that lay in my Power to get him an Employment to live by, but all is in Vain; and to put the Learning and Breeding he has, behind a Coach, and into a Livery, woud break a well-born young mans Heart. Were he strong enough for a Camp he shou'd go, but he's fitter to manage the Pen than the Sword. He speaks and writes French very well, and is willing to undertake any Employment of which he is Capable, and I'd give good security for his Fidelity.

Pray, direct him what he shou'd do; or if my request appear unreasonable forgive the zeal of a burden'd mind for an unhappy Relation: I hope you'll answer this without inflicting a publick punishment on me, by exposing my request; who am, &c.

Answ. Twas some time since, that we declar'd our Resolution not to meddle with things of this Nature, not that we shou'd not gladly embrace any occasion which lay in our Power of Assisting the miserable, but because our Advice and Pity woud, it may be, make the matter but little the better, and because, shou'd we frequently Publish Cases of this Nature, we shou'd be always follow'd with 'em, and have room for nothing else. However, Compassion has once more prevail'd against our past Resolves, and we have taken new ones, not only to insert the Case before us, but once in every Volume, to Print one of the same Nature, the most pressing that we find among all our queries, that well disposed persons who are in a Capacity of doing good, may have an opportunity of doing that which others woud do, if in the same Circumstances.

As to the present case, the querist woud put us out of a Condition of doing him any service, the only way wherein we may be Capable of doing it. For he woud have us not to Print his Case at Large, which if we had not done how cou'd any know it, or employ his Friend as he himself desires, in any thing whereof he's capable? We woud not willingly grieve any Man, much less Aggravate their Misery, but we can't but take Notice, that heighth of Spirit very much mis-becomes Mediocrity of Fortune, since a Wise Man will do any thing that's not really Base, rather than Perish (and we must confess we think nothing Base that's necessary, and is not sinful.) Tho' at the same time he'd never chuse a meaner post, could he light on a handsomer, which that the person concern'd may do, is our real desire, and the end of our publishing this query, and if we hear any thing more about it, he shall be sure to have publick notice.

Quest. 2. I liv'd with my Wife Clelia, under the strictest ties of Mutual Love and Friendship: Her very

particular Friend and mine Penelope was and is a pious, virtuous, and handsome young Lady, endu'd with all the qualifications necessary for the accomplishing of a person, who to a surprise sur pass those of her sex: She was the sprightly and lovely companion of all our Divertisements: Her Prudence, Modesty, Discretion, and gentle Temper, mix'd with a Liveliness of Spirit, not easily to be found in any other, engag'd my Friendship and Affection for her, to such a Degree as gave occasion to her, and my Wife to make their Observations upon it. I who had only Virtue and Friendship in my Thoughts, was Struck with amazement, when my Wife told me that Penelope was afraid she might be the cause of Jealousy between the two best Friends she had in the world, wherefore she thought it woud be fit to retire from my Family; and tho' my Wife seem'd extremely concern'd at this resolution, and reply'd, there was no need of being afraid of Jealousy, where there was so entire a Conjugal Love and Affection, yet Penelope went into a far Country and left us. Her absence was some affliction to us, wherefore after a long time she was persuad'd to return, which was no small Joy to us all. This satisfaction of seeing in our Family a Friend so well accomplished for all manner of Conversation, after an absence caus'd upon so nice a Principle, did so extremely increase the Friendship and Esteem I had for her before she left us, that now, after many serious meditations and mature deliberation, not in passion but Coolness of Temper, I did Vow, Swear, Write and Sign with my own Hand a Contract in the presence of Almighty God, that if ever my Wife shou'd dy, Penelope and I surviving, I woud marry her; since which time I have been an Instrument to hinder several from marrying her, any of which matches woud have been probably much to her advantag. This is the matter of Fact.

And now I'm a Widdower, Penelope a single woman, as good and as desirable as ever. My Domestic affairs, as well as my Friends, do urge me to marry a second time. Some particular Relations of mine, for very solid Reasons, as they think, woud have me marry another person, and not Penelope, tho' she knows more of my Family affairs than any body else can do: She indeed makes no claim, nor pretends any right from what I promis'd, but is still indifferent. On the whole pray resolve these questions.

1. Whether I'm oblig'd to marry Penelope?
2. Can I marry any other with a safe Conscience?

Answ. Had there been a previous question to these two, namely, whether you did well in making any such Contract in your first Wives time, we shou'd have resolv'd it in the Negative, as we have done heretofore, more than once in cases of the like nature. And were there nothing more between you, and the Lady, as we hope there was not, since nothing else appears to us, and the Lady by her leaving your Family, appears to have been both a prudent and virtuous person, and it may be saw more reason for't than you have here inserted; yet 'tis certain, that in making such a Contract, you went too far, and brought your self into such snares as might have been of much worse Consequence. However, now 'tis done, and she it seems is not ignorant of it, you are, we doubt not, oblig'd to marry her, unles's she please to release you, as well in Conscience as Generosity, since you own you have hinder'd her of several good matches; and if you are thus oblig'd to marry her, there will need no Oedipus to resolve you whether you ought to marry any other.

Quest. 3. I lately fell in Love with a young woman, partly for her Virtues, but cou'd not tell how to let her know it. At last I thought of a young man of my acquaintance that liv'd in the House with her, to whom I made my passion known, but found by discourse that he himself Lov'd her: I can't tell but if I shou'd court her, I might

might gain her affections as soon as he, but before your Judgments whether I shou'd do him any wrong in making my addresses to her, or whether it mayn't be lawful for me to court her, tho' he began before me ?

Answ. If all men were so scrupulous in this case as our present querists, what a loss woud the Ladies have ? And what a deal of running, crowding, and shoving woud there be at the Gates of the Rich and the Fair, if first come first serv'd, were an infallible rule in Courtship. Besides, that the poor Ladies woud have very hard measure, to take up with the first pretender, tho' he shou'd chance to have but one Eye, and half a Nose. But to the question, whether the querist shou'd do any wrong to his acquaintance in making his Addresses. We answer, we can't see that he wrongs him, since there appears no obligation to the contrary, no confidence, or Friendship. To the second, whether he mayn't make his Court tho' the other has begun before him, there's no doubt but he may, unless he knows that she has entertain'd his Courtship and promis'd him Marriage. Tho' we confess 'twou'd be more humane, and generous if he sees the former so passionately loves her, as not to be able to live, or live happy without her, to drop his own Pretences, and make an end of 'em before he has begun 'em.

Quest. 4. Suppose a person shou'd, (as several are observed to do in this City) strictly keep the Lords Day, and go to Prayer every Night with his Family, but shou'd also go to the Tavern every Night, sitting there from Six or Seven to Ten or Eleven, or after, and thence come home frequently to Prayer, Loaded with Wine, tho' not it may be, to that degree as quite to drown their Reason, and continue in this Course, all his Life. Pray tell me, whether you think such a way of living be justifiable or not ?

Answ. 'Tis certain that a person is much more exposed in a way of Trade, as 'tis now managed, to the Temptations of Intemperance, than in most other ways of Life, the Tavern being now the beginning or ending of almost every Business : Nor is there any doubt but that 'tis very lawful after the Fatigues of the Day, to refresh a Mans self with a Moderate Glass of Good Wine, and a Virtuous Friend, for an Hour, sometimes in an Evening. Nor can the Tavern make an Action bad which is in it self Indifferent, nay, it may be necessary in some Cases. But still what's this to the indefensible practice of many Persons ; we Merkle not now with the openly Profane, but even such as make great Professions of Piety and Religion. Who shou'd know, that the Sin of Drunkenness does not only Confust in the Locking up their Sence, or drowning their Reason, but also, and it may be Chiefly too, in an Abuse of the Creature, which God has given for better Purposes ; they must also have heard of those that are strong to poure in strong Drink, that continue till Wine inflame, and Distemper their whole Bodies, tho' they are so Accustom'd to it that it can't overcome their Brains ; neither can they be Ignorant of the Woe, that the Scripture Pronounces against them, any more than of the unsufferable Abuse of their Time, a considerable part of which woud be much better Employ'd in Acts of Private Devotion ; and the Horrid Scandal they must Necessarily bring on Religion, if they are still such Enemies to it, as to pretend to Embrace it. Add to this, the High Affront it must be to Heaven, to lift up Eyes to it, Heavy with Wine, and to present such Petitions as it may be the Speaker himself knows not well what they are, at least 'tis certain that the whole Intention of his Mind can never go with them. These considerations we woud hope, if calmly weigh'd, woud prevail on any person who woud but be thought to be truly religious, much more on such as are truly so, to forsake so unjustifiable so dangerous and so scandalous a Practice, which still gathers more strength the longer 'tis continued ; as we know our selves some whom they have already prevail'd upon, wholly to forsake it.

Quest. 5. Pray what considerations are proper and useful, when a Man is beset with Temptations ? How shall he excite his Reason, or behave himself to avoid or Prevail against Sins that are frequently committed against the Duties of Conscience, as Fornication and the Like ?

Answ. Reason is not enough, there must be Faith too, to subdue this Traytor within, as well as the World and the Devil, our Declar'd and open Enemies. We mean Faith in the Largest Extent of the word, an actual lively belief of what God has reveal'd, especially the rewards and punishments of another Life, and of his own presence every where, and consciousness of all our Actions ; and also an Actual Dependance on him for his Assistance against such unequal Enemies, at the same time not forgetting we are *Rational Creatures*, but flying from this, as we woud from any other less formidable danger, and Avoiding all Occasions and Temptations unto it, as well as Sloth, Intemperance, and the Like : Add to these, where there needs, Fasting, and other Acts of Mortification, which St. Paul himself did make use of to Subdue the Rebel, which had he neglected, he cou'd never have hoped for that promise, that Gods Grace shou'd be sufficient for him.

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